8 Online Course Design Tips to Accommodate Teaching Students with Disabilities

1. **Cue important information:** Provide a *table of contents* or site map to show how information is organized within your course. Include an audio description of where students can find important course information.
2. **Practice redundancy:** Describe course content in a variety of ways. Include detailed captions for images and tables. Provide additional notes on PowerPoint slides. If using a video as part of course content, ensure that closed captions are used or that a transcript of the video is available.
3. **Be consistent:** Rather than changing navigation bars or buttons from page to page, *one navigation scheme* should be used consistently throughout your online course design.
4. **Organize your links:** Organize long lists of hyperlinks into categories and provide a label and a short description of the site content for each link.
5. **Keep it simple:** Avoid using color, flashing text and unnecessary graphics to emphasize points. Avoid using media that requires special software or plugins that must be obtained from external sites. (most especially if you have a vision-impaired student)
6. **Be flexible**: For example, offer students a choice of several possible essay questions or provide students a choice in how they will present the final product of a research project.
7. ***Use asynchronous discussion***: Synchronous discussions can be overwhelming for students who suffer from distractibility or factual recall limitations. ***Asynchronous discussions allow all students more time for reflection and clarification.***
8. **Be creative when extending times for testing**: Extended time on exams is an incredibly common modification for teaching students with disabilities in the brick and mortar classroom. One way to get around this modification is to leave the time limits open but record the amount of time spent in an exam. Students are given a prescribed amount of time to take the exam, and this time can be extended for students who have provided documentation for their extended time accommodation.

Incorporating these 8 simple strategies into your online classroom will benefit   all   students, including those with disabilities. With distractions and accessibility problems eliminated, all students will be able to access and better engage with the course content, ultimately making them more successful online learners.